

ANCIENT IRON RAILING.

THE examples which are occasionally brought to light of ancient Gothic ironwork illustrate, by the beauty of their designs, the very great skill and ability of the old workmen. Unluckily, ancient Gothic ironwork, unless in the form of locks, hinges, or such small matters, is extremely rare; legitimate iron railing is seldom met with; iron gates never; it has been doubted whether, in the early periods, the latter ever existed. Of ancient iron railing, certainly, the most interesting example that ever came under my notice is the one I now have the pleasure of illustrating on the opposite page. A length of about 30 feet of this railing was sent over to England from the continent; it formed part of one of those ship-loads of relics, furniture, carving, &c., which are so continually arriving. From the profits realised by such importations, it would appear, that the rage for making new houses the representations of old ones has not at all abated.

In consequence of the ironwork coming over in this way, no information as to the precise locale whence it was brought, can be obtained. From its appearance, it probably formed the railing round an ancient shrine or tomb. The style is certainly French, and the date the commencement of the Renaissance. It is at present the property of Mr. Pratt, of Bond-street, who received at the same time an immense number of locks, hinges, &c., of the same ancient period.

Some insight into the forms and designs of ancient ironwork can be obtained, by referring to old illustrated books; one instance I will give: in the "Architectura Coriosa," by Georg Andrek Bœcleri, published in Nuremberg in 1664, a copy of which is in the Klog's collection, British Museum, a representation of the ancient ironwork round the Schonbrunn, or beautiful fountain, is given. It appears to have been of most elaborate and elegant design; the tops of the standards are adorned with large bunches of flowers, leaves, &c., falling or bending over the railing. The print is well worth inspection, especially as only the bare frame-work of the railing remains. A view of the fountain is given in Mr. Haghe's first volume of views in Belgium and Germany.

The smaller print represents, one-fourth the real size, some old ironwork remaining in Ashford Church, Kent, belonging to two tombs of the period of James the First. C. J. R.

KENTISH RAGSTONE AS A BUILDING MATERIAL.

AT the end of last year, Mr. Whichcote, jun., read a paper on this material, before the Institute of Architects, which was reported at some length in our pages.* This has since been enlarged, and is now published in the shape of a pamphlet,† worthy the attention of our readers.

The finest qualities of stone are, at present, procured at Boughton, near Maidstone, where the quarries have been worked for several centuries. In our previous notice, we described the various layers of stone and hascock; in these quarries, and to this we refer. The hascock requires very little labour in dressing. It is sometimes used as an inside lining to walls built with ragstone. "It is usually roughly squared, an operation that should never be neglected, as the crumbling nature of the stone would endanger the security, if the work is exposed to the unequal pressure that would result from the use of irregularly shaped stones. Care should be taken not to place hascock in situations where it is exposed to very great pressure.

For jambs, arches, &c., sound bricks are best to be used with it. When the work is of a superior description, and the masonry intended to show inside, as is sometimes the case, the hascock is capable of being worked to a very good surface with close joints; and as it can be procured in blocks of a considerable size, hascock is very applicable, as an internal facing.

There is a circular staircase in the gateway of the college (built by Archbishop Con-

ANCIENT IRONWORK, ASHFORD CHURCH, KENT.



ney) at Maidstone, which has the walls faced internally with hascock."

"The ragstone must not be used internally, as it 'sweats,' that is, the condensed moisture from the atmosphere is not absorbed at all, but hangs on it in globules, and will show even through two coat plastering.

"Sunk work and moulding upon ragstone should, as much as possible, be avoided, both from the great cost of executing them in so hard a material, and the rapid decay that so much wrought surface causes in this stone. The mediæval builders were well aware of this fact, and while they used ragstone extensively in the more substantial parts of their structures, preferred Caen or even fire or sandstone for the decorated portions. Caen stone is more peculiarly appropriate to be used with ragstone, on account of the small difference of the two materials in colour,† a distinction entirely obliterated by time.

In using 'ragstone ashlar' great care should be taken to have the stone laid upon its natural bed, as any other proceeding will almost certainly be followed by rapid decay; not but that I believe the stone in its soundest form to be almost beyond the influence of time or the elements, but that from the thinness of the

strata, blocks of a large size can seldom be entirely freed from hascock; and even what appears to the eye as blue stone, does, for a considerable distance inward, retain the perishable nature of its enveloping crust. A block of ragstone (if the face be worked) will present, in damp weather, an appearance precisely similar to the heart and sap of timber.

When it is necessary (as in case of coping, &c.) that one bed should be exposed, care should be taken in skilfully the stone to reduce its dimensions as much as possible from the upper side, so as to expose only the soundest portion of the stone to the action of the atmosphere. In some situations, such as mullions, and door and window jambs, an unsightly appearance would be produced by too exact an attention to the beds of the stone, as the ashlar is generally too small to range with more than one course of bedders. In these cases the old masons seem to have departed from their usual rule; and to have set the blocks on end so as to embrace two or three courses; but as the depth of the block required to work an ordinary jamb or mullion is not very great, it is not a difficult thing to get the whole thickness required out of the heart of stone, and where this has been done, the work will be found pretty free from decay."

"There are several modes of building with ragstone, either now in use or practised by our ancestors. That most frequently adopted in the better kind of modern buildings is the

* Page 105, Vol. III.

† Wools, Holborn.

† A layer of sand which intervenes between the strata of stone, and in some localities becomes so consolidated as to form a very useful building material.

* The circular turret stair, at the new Homerton church (now erecting from the designs of Mr. A. Ashpitel), is worked in this manner, and may be inspected as (it is believed) the only specimen in the neighbourhood of London.
† The difference is very great at first, but a few years will make them harmonise in colour.